

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on November 03, 2004, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Prior to this paper, claims 1-4 and 14-31 were pending. By this paper, Applicants do not cancel any claims, amend claim 31 and add claims 32-41. Therefore, claims 1-4 and 14-41 are now pending.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance for the reasons that follow.

Allowed Claims

Applicants thank examiner Laxton for allowing claims 1-4 and 14-30.

Acknowledgement of References Cited

Applicants respectfully request that the references listed in the Information Disclosure Statement filed by Applicants on **December 15, 2003**, be initialed by an examiner and a copy of the listing showing the initialization be provided to Applicants' agent. Another copy of the Form PTO/SB/08 filed with the December 15, 2003, IDS is enclosed for the PTO's convenience at Appendix A of this paper.

Claim 4 and the Preliminary Amendment filed on 1/22/99

Applicants acknowledge the position of the PTO with respect to claim 4. Applicants therefore have amended claim 4 as seen above, and respectfully request that the amendment be entered.

Claim Objections

Claim 31 stands objected to as being in improper form because it is a multiple dependent claim that depends from another multiple dependent claim (claim 21 via claims 22-30). In response, Applicants amend claim 31 as seen above.

Applicants have also added claims 32-41. These claims depend, respectively, from claims 21-30. The language of claims 32-41 is duplicative of claim 31, except for that relating to its dependency. Amended claim 31 and new claims 33-41, collectively, provide the same scope of coverage as would have been afforded by pre-amended claim 31 if a multiple dependent claim could depend from a multiple dependent claim. Claim 32 simply depends directly from claim 21, the claim from which claims 22-30 depend.

Applicants respectfully request entry of (i) the above amendment to claim 31 and (ii) the new claims, and respectfully submit that claims 31-41 should be allowed for at least the reason that the claims depend from allowed claims. Reconsideration of claim 31 and allowance of claims 32-41 is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of

papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Examiner Laxton is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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By MJL

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